

The TERMS of National Happiness
stated and recommended.

A
S E R M O N

Delivered at

NORTHAMPTON,

FEB. the 6th M.DCC.LVI.

Appointed to be observed,

As a Day of general and publick Fasting,
Humiliation, and Prayer.

By ROBERT GILBERT.

Τρέμει δ' ὄρη, καὶ γαῖα, καὶ πελώριος
Βυθὸς θαλάσσης, καὶ ῥέων ὕψος μέγα
Ὅταν ἐπιβλέψῃ γοργὰν ὄμμα Δεσπότη.

Ex Æschylo. ap. Just. Mart. de Monarch.

L O N D O N :

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2 CHRONICLES XV. 2.

And he went out to meet Afa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Afa, and Judah, and Benjamin: The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.



IF you reflect upon that dreadful and extensive *Earthquake*, with which some neighbouring Countries have been visited, and the Importance of the present Situation of our public Affairs, (as to the Issue of them, to the *Peace and Safety* of these Kingdoms; to our *Commerce and Liberty*; and above all, to the most valuable Blessing of the *Protestant Religion*;) you will evidently perceive the highest Reason and Fitness in that royal Proclamation, which has appointed the solemn As-

semblies of this Day. And amidst our Humiliations and Prayers, we cannot but thankfully rejoice in it, as a Token for good, that *the Great Regent of the Universe* has put it into the Heart of our *most Gracious Sovereign*, to set the Example in these necessary duties, and by the Authority wherewith he is invested, to call upon his Subjects in general, to concur with him in the purposes of such an Appointment. Especially as the Duties which are this Day recommended, by divine and human Authority, are the most probable means of our obtaining the protection and favour of Heaven, upon which the Safety and Prosperity of Nations, as well as of Individuals, do evidently depend.

It is of vast Importance for us to be sensible, that we have a deep Concern with the Deity, whether we are considered under a personal, or a national Capacity. And certainly we can doubt as little of the Providence of God, as of his Existence; these being two of the first Principles of all Religion, whether natural, or revealed. And this we ought to esteem as one of the great advantages, which we receive from Revelation, that it instructs us, as to the Expectations, which we may entertain from the great Governor of the World; plainly teaching

ing us, not only how he *may*, but upon what Measures he *will* proceed, in all his dealings with the Children of Men; that he will not only maintain his Sovereignty, and assert his Prerogative; but will always proceed according to rules of infinite Wisdom, Equity, and Goodness. His Power indeed is absolute, and *his Kingdom ruleth over all* (a). Nevertheless *Justice and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne* (b); and the Measures which he will pursue, in his providential Administration, will invariably be, on the whole, according to the Conduct and Character of his Creatures; especially of those among whom his Name and Religion are professed.

These Rules and Measures are laid down in the Words first recited, in three hypothetical Propositions; the repeating of which is very plainly intended for the surer Confirmation of the Thing asserted. *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; if ye seek him, he will be found of you: But if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.* Yes, these are the Terms upon which you and I stand with God, and these may be considered, as the Standard of all Rules, in which any Nation, or People, is, or may be concerned. And though this Message was
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(a) *Psal.* ciii. 19.(b) *Lxxxix.* 14.

sent by a Prophet to *Asa*, and his victorious Army, at a Time, when they were returning in triumph, from the War with the *Ethiopians*; yet that is no sufficient Objection against the application of it to the present Circumstances and Day, since we can hope for the divine Presence and Blessing only upon the same Terms, on their Compliance with which, they were led to expect the continuance of their prosperous State: And perhaps our own Designs and Expectations may need as much to be restrained or regulated as theirs did, to whom it was originally addressed. They were a People flushed with Victory, and probably were full of Contrivances for securing their Peace, by pushing on their Success to it's utmost Improvement, when the Prophet so earnestly interposed, and demanded, in his Turn, to be heard among those, who were delivering in their Sense of Things: "*Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin.*" And it may be useful for us to consider the Message, which he thus introduced, — while some among us are full of News from abroad; — some exulting in their own Safety, supposing their Mountain stands strong; — Others in dread of farther Commotions in the Earth, and trembling with Apprehension for themselves, or their Country; — some
may

may be still fluctuating in Uncertainty, whether we shall enjoy the Blessings of Peace, or suffer the Judgments of the Sword;—Some busy about Expedients for carrying on the War; Others raising Recruits for augmenting our Land forces; Others in the equipment of Fleets; and some in their Destination;—Some may be forming and settling Treaties of Commerce or Alliance;—Others perhaps are considering Overtures from our Enemies for accommodating Matters in difference, accompanied with the Expectations and good Wishes of ten thousand honest and good Hearts for a happy Issue and Success to these momentous deliberations. I shall leave the governing Part of the Nation to act as they shall judge most proper in this Crisis; and if I may have leave to shew my Opinion, among others of my fellow-Subjects, I would do this, in these prophetick Words, containing Terms, upon our national Regard to which, all warrantable Hope of our public Tranquility and Happiness is suspended. *The Lord is with you while ye be with him, &c.*

In the further Prosecution of which Subject, I propose to begin with enquiring,

I. What it is for the Lord to be with a People or Nation.

II. To

II. To represent of what Importance it is to have his favourable Presence, in respect to National Happiness.

III. To declare more particularly, the Terms upon which this may be expected; or its contrary apprehended. And

IV. To conclude with pointing out to you some of those Uses, to which the whole may be applied.

I. What is it for the Lord to be with a People or Nation?

It will hardly be necessary for me to observe, that his being with a Nation, in this Place, is not to be understood, in respect of the Omnipresence of his Essence. For in that respect, he is equally with all Nations and People in the Earth, at all Times: And *as the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him (c)*, so he is universally present in all parts of his wide extended dominions, and with every Creature to whom he has communicated Existence. The Phrase therefore must signify his Presence, not of *being* only but of *Operation*: And not only this in general; for his Energy, as well as Essence, is with all the World; sustaining, ordering, and disposing all Things, which as they were at first

* (c) 1 Kings viii. 27. 2 Chron. ii. 6.

first created by his Power, must consequently appertain to his natural Dominion and moral Government, (according to the respective Capacities of their Natures,) and be made subservient to the designs of his Glory.

But besides these Senses, he is with some Persons and some Nations in a more peculiar manner, and in a way of Blessing and favourable Operation ; regarding them with a kind distinction ; treating them as the Objects of his more tender, indulgent, and affectionate Care, and by special providential Interpositions, accomplishing the designs of his good will in their Safety, Prosperity, and Happiness. So, we are told, *The Lord was with Joseph ; and he was a prosperous Man* (d). And so *Abimelech* observed to *Abraham*, *that God was with him in all that he did* (e). Accordingly his being with a Nation, imports his taking the direction of their Affairs ; guiding them by his Counsel, and succeeding them with his Blessing ; his being their *Dwelling-Place*, Protection and Defence ; and his manifesting himself in eminent appearances of Mercy with and for them. Sometimes indeed his *Judgments are a great Deep* (f), and we are often incompetent Judges of the drift of particular Dispensations. And yet we are too

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ready

(d) Gen. xxxix. 2. (e) xxi. 22. (f) Psal. xxxvi. 6.

ready to pronounce as positively concerning some of these, as if we could certainly distinguish between *his Love and his Hatred in those Things, which lye before us*. Whereas we should be cautious of concluding, or even suspecting, such to be always the *greatest Sinners* (g), who appear to us *more remarkably to suffer* in this World; which is not properly a State of Recompence or Retribution; though it must be granted, that publick Societies and Communities can be dealt with, as such, only in the present State; this being the only one in which they will subsist. Nevertheless, great Danger Calamity and Distress, may sometimes attend a People, while God is with them. For he often appoints these Things to alarm those amongst them who are secure, and for the further Reformation of those who are truly good; and his secret invisible presence is the support of the latter, whilst they are under the visible Rebukes of his Providence. And on the other Hand, many wicked Nations may appear to flourish for a while, among whom the Lord is not, with respect to his gracious Presence; but is only using them for the carrying on his own Purposes, while their Prosperity, through their ungrateful abuse of his Goodness, is hastening their Ruin; and

and this when the *Measure of their Iniquities shall be filled up* (b), may be expected to prove so much the more severe, as it has been longer delay'd. Whereas for God to be with a People, in the Sense intended in the Text, is his manifesting his Presence in their Counsels and Undertakings, and promoting their best Interests, as his own infinite Wisdom directs. And this may frequently be done in disappointing their own earnest Wishes, the full Gratification of which, might in many Instances, be so inconsistent with his Wisdom and Goodness towards them, as to prove, in the Event, their certain and inevitable Ruin.

And now we have settled what it is for the Lord to be with a People, or Nation, I proceed

II. To represent the vast Importance of his favourable Presence in order to National Happiness.

Amidst our Complaints and Apprehensions, *There are many that say, Who will shew us any good* (i)? But let our Desires and Enquiries be earnest and ardent for *the Light of God's Countenance*, as a Pledge of his Presence with us. For this is indeed our greatest Concernment. Here our main Strength lies. Hence it is that we are

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(b) Gen. xv. 16.

(i) Psal. iv. 6.

not consumed; and on this depend our Life, Safety, and Peace. Though Ruin and Destruction shou'd seem to be rushing in upon us, we shou'd have no Cause to be greatly alarm'd; and shou'd the proud Waves roll together, if God is pleas'd to appear with and for us, we might take up the Apostle's demand, and boldly face all Nations with this Challenge, *Who shall be against us (k)?* On the other hand, he can raise, by the least breath of his Nostrils, such a Tempest, as wou'd ruffle our calmest Seasons, and change our Security into those *Perils*, which wou'd bring us *to our Wit's end (l)*. And there are such unexpected Revolutions in all human Counsels and Preparations, such disappointments of the fairest Probabilities, as make it abundantly evident, that the Blessing of Heaven is of the utmost Importance to the Success even of our best concerted Schemes. It is above all other Things desireable, to have *him* with us, who sits at the Helm of the Universe, managing it, as a Pilot, who steers the floating Vessel as he pleases. Under this View the very *Heathens*, who had no other than natural Light, have represented the Divine Providence. And a very little Reflection on so unbounded an Influence, ought to give us *Christians*, who are so much

(k) Rom. viii. 31.

(l) Psal. cvii. 27.

much better instructed in it, a grand Idea of the vast privilege of his Presence and Friendship; as well as fill our Minds with a most astonishing Dread of his forsaking us and turning our Enemy. For under that Character, he will appear formidable, beyond every Object which the most affrighted Imagination can represent dreadful.

But the vast Importance of his Presence and Friendship may, perhaps, be set in a more convincing Light, if we consider it in some particular Circumstances and Cases, such as the present Times point out to us, as those to which we ought, *this Day*, more especially, and very seriously to attend, *viz. Earthquakes*, with repeated Accounts of which we have been justly alarm'd; *war*, with which we are threaten'd, and are, in some sort embroil'd; and, if there be any other Calamity amongst us, which we ought to look upon, as a publick Mark of the Divine Displeasure, for the Sins of the People.

(1.) You will easily admit it to be of the utmost Consequence, to have God with us, as our best Security from the tremendous Effects of *Earthquakes*; which, at the same Time that they have been but moderately felt in *Great Britain*, have very lately spread Astonishment and Desolation in other Kingdoms, to a wider Extent, than perhaps has been ever known,
since

since the Creation of the World. Our earliest Accounts from *Portugal* began with telling us abruptly, that *Lisbon was no more, and Thousands and ten Thousands of Souls had perished.* And, if we imagine the Consternation and Confusion into which those must have been thrown, who surviv'd such a sudden, promiscuous, and general Ruin, we can't wonder we shou'd wait so long for more particular Narratives of that sad Catastrophe. And when these at length came, they represented such Scenes of Distress and Horror, as might justly have been expected from the Hand of the Almighty, *shaking the Earth out of her Place, and making the Pillars thereof to tremble (m)*; at the same Time that it affrighted the mighty Waters (n), which, it is said, were rais'd many yards in perpendicular Height. But no Wonder if that fluid Body suffer'd such a violent Concussion, when the King's Palace, and the strongest Buildings of the City, were rock'd from their Foundations, and the fall of Houses on all sides made the wretched Inhabitants seek for Safety in flight, who made their Way through Multitudes of dead and dying Persons, who, together with Carriages, Chaises, and Mules overthrown, were lying in the Streets. And those, who with Difficulty, escap'd with their

(m.) Job ix. 6.

(n) Hab. iii. 10.

their Lives, ran crying in the open Places for Mercy, and raising dismal Shrieks and Lamentations ; having the additional Horror of beholding the Flames of a Conflagration, communicated from Street to Street, by Flakes of Fire driven by the Wind, which compleated the City's Ruin in eight Days. Poor Creatures ! It chills my Blood to think, at this Distance, of their agonizing Distress, when their Fears urged them to fly, and yet wou'd not suffer them to advance ; *the Lord having fenced up their Way, that they cou'd not pass, and set Darknefs in their Paths* (o). Many stood still and perished. Others ran, they knew not whither, as long as they cou'd keep their Feet upon a Pavement which totter'd under them. Many dy'd of the Fright. Some Hundreds trampled under foot and suffocated. And many in their Delirium took to the Sea and perished.

After this Summary of the Accounts of this sad Catastrophe which needs no Colours to heighten it, I must leave your Imaginations and Compassions to follow those poor Remains of Inhabitants, who surviv'd the Loss of their Substance Friends and Effects — burnt out of their Houses — flying half naked, — and reduc'd to the sad Necessity of lying in the
open

(o) Job xix. 8.

open Air, upon the Ground; or at the best, to live in Barracks or Tents, in the Fields; where many more have perished, by Diseases which they contracted; partly by Fatigue, Watching and Terror; and partly by scarcity of Provision, and want of Shelter from the Weather. And it must have been very affecting, to have seen their *Sovereign* himself in the last extremity of Distress, sadly complaining, *though a King*, of wanting *Subjects*; without a Habitation; without Money; and without Bread. — A loud and alarming Voice from Heaven, proclaiming that *Princes* and *Peasants* are equally dependant upon *the chief and only Potentate* (p); proclaiming the Vanity of all human Affluence and Grandeur, and the Instability of all earthly Possessions. The narrow Limits of a single Discourse will not permit me to enlarge under this Head; I must therefore refer you, for farther Particulars, to the publick Papers, which have been ever since bringing in sad Tidings of the like import from other Places. And in those received from *Africa*, we see great reason to fear, that the Earthquake has produc'd very tremendous Effects in *that part of the World, as well as at Lisbon*, and along the Coast of *Portugal*.

“ From

“ From all Accounts it has been computed,
 “ that the Earthquakes have continued for the
 “ Space of sixty-one Days, *i. e.* from the first
 “ of *November* to the thirty-first of *December*
 “ inclusive : in which Space of Time they
 “ have been felt, with more or less Violence,
 “ from the Eastern Shores of the *vast Atlan-*
 “ *tic Ocean* to the Heart of *Germany* ; and from
 “ the frozen Clime of *Iceland* to the *Tropic of*
 “ *Cancer* ; taking a Range of about 4000
 “ miles from *West to East*, and above 2000
 “ from *South to North*.”

Certainly, we must acknowledge the finger
 of God, *in the Evil that is done (q) to those once*
opulent and populous Cities, which are now
 reduced to Heaps of Rubbish and Ruins. For
 whatever the immediate Causes were, or their
 Connection with the Effects which they have
 produced might be, they were either ordained
 by him, in some original Establishment, or di-
 rected in their Operations by his Superinten-
 dency, who it is as certain is a moral Gover-
 nor, as it is that he doth what he pleases in the
 World of Nature. Supposing therefore com-
 motions in the Earth to be the Result of natural
 Causes, they are Causes which are laid far out
 of our Sight, and out of the reach of our

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Arm, to prevent their Operation. And as your late very valuable Pastor once expressed himself upon a like Occasion (*r*), with his usual Force and Perspicuity, “ they are Causes disposed by
 “ him, who from the Day in which he laid
 “ the Foundations of the Earth, knew every
 “ Circumstance of their Operation with infi-
 “ nitely more Certainty, than the most skilful
 “ Engineer the Disposition and Success of a
 “ Mine, which he has prepared and directed,
 “ and which he fires in the appointed Mo-
 “ ment.” It would argue egregious Impiety not to observe and confess his mighty Hand, where it is so evidently, so conspicuously, and so terribly lifted up, as it were, in the View of all the World, as also not to *humble ourselves under it* (*s*), as displaying a signal for us to prepare; since ours is a land laden with iniquity (*t*). And considering our superior Advantages of Light and Liberty, many among us are perhaps greater Sinners, than they *who have suffered such things. We also are mortal Men, and dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and liable to be crushed before the moth* (*u*). And though our God is slow to an-

(*r*) Dr. Doddridge's *Guilt and Doom of Capernaum*, Pref. p. 6.

(*s*) 1 Pet. v. 6.

(*t*) *Isai.* i. 4.

(*u*) *Job* iv. 19.

anger (x), and with much patience suffers us; so that the like judgments have not been *executed speedily upon us* (y); who shall assure us they never shall be? Who shall assure us, that there shall be any interval between the beginning and end of our ruin? And that we shall not be hurried down by *Provinces together* to the dead; some wide-gaping chasm of this part of the earth which we inhabit, being burst open by some violent convulsions in the subterraneous caverns, to receive us as into a general sepulchre? This grand work of terror, you know, is not wont to be attended with those premonitions, which usually precede other calamities, the notices of which generally afford some opportunity of making, or at least, meditating an escape. But all the warning which we ought to expect in this case, is that which is proclaimed in the visitations of neighbouring, or of more distant countries. And all the refuge of which we can avail ourselves, is in God, whose favour, presence, and friendship, before all things, it therefore behoves us, while we may, to secure.

(2.) To have the Lord with us by his gracious Presence, is likewise of the greatest Importance, as to the Issue of the War, wherewith

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(x) *Nehem.* ix. 17.(y) *Eccl.* viii. 11.

we are threatened, and in some sort, already embroiled. For encroachments and hostilities have been commenced against us, *in full Peace and against the faith of Treaties*. And we, in our turn have been making *Reprisals* for indemnifying ourselves, as well as have been providing against future Insults, by vast Preparations both by Sea and Land. But who considers as he ought, how precarious this our Situation; how uncertain the issues of War; and the Importance of the divine Presence with *Great Britain*, its Dominions and Colonies, in this Crisis? Who considers that our multiplied Provocations in the midst of that Profusion of divine Goodness, with which we have been distinguished, seem to have put a Sword into the hands of the Lord? And what if he, in justice, should have put a Sword into the hands of our Enemies? So he called the *Assyrians* the *rod of his Anger, and the staff in their hands, his Indignation* (2). And if the Kings of the Earth weary him with their Sins, he can raise up one Nation to scourge another, and cause the cup of Fury to pass from Kingdom to Kingdom. *The Hearts of all Men are in his Hands*; and he diverts the Streams of their Passions, and turns their Ambition and Resentment

(2) Isai. x. 5, 6. Prov. xxi. 1.

ment, *as the rivers of waters*, into what channels he pleases. And He, *the Lord of Hosts*, is the high and mighty Commander of all the armed Forces in the Universe, whose Colours soever they wear, and under whose Standards soever they are enlisted. *To him belongeth Salvation (a) Power (b) and Vengeance (c)*. And the battle succeeds *not always with the Strong, (d)* but according to his destination of the Victory. If he should forsake us, in vain should we look for help to Man, who is a mutable Creature, whose Affection may change, and whose Power may be blasted in a moment; so that here is no certain Dependence for us, in regard either to his Inclination or Ability. And when he is best affected towards us, and most capable of acting for us, he is only a subordinate Instrument in the Hand of Providence. And this consideration concerning any single Man, will hold equally true with respect to any number of Men collectively taken. For all their counsels and operations, be their policy force or numbers, what they may, are subject to a divine controul, which is able either to prosper or frustrate any human Attempts or Preparations. Let us not therefore trust in *an Arm of Flesh*.
Neither

(a) Psal. iii. 8. (b) Ixii. 11. (c) Deut. xxxii. 35.
Psal. xciv. 21. Heb. x. 30. (d) Eccl. ix. 11.

Neither let us say, *It is sufficient that this great Nation is a wise and understanding People* (e), that we have Counfel and Srrength for the War; and where Counfel and Strength is, how should they choofe but prevail? But let us recollect, that *no King is faved by the multitude of an Host* (f), and that *mighty Nations are not delivered by their much Strength*, unless God be with them. But the Lord God is *mighty in Battle* (g), he inspires the Soldiers with Courage, and their Commanders with Conduct; and can confound the Counfels of the Wicked, take their Underftandings from them, or caufe their Hearts to fail in the day of Battle. On the other Hand, he has often blessed thofe whom he has determined to favour, with fuch a concurrence of happy circumftances, as that the frame of Nature has appeared in the caufe, which he, it's great Author, has espoufed. We undoubtedly may, (may every true Britifh Heart muft) feel a Satisfaction in reflecting, on the Strength of our Army, our naval Force, the almoft unexampled unanimity of our Counfels at Home, and the conclufion of a late Treaty with a *refpectable Ally* on the Continent. Nevertheless thefe Things fhould afford only a fober, moderate Pleafure, and not become the matter of our
boasting

(e) Deut iv. 6. (f) Pfal. xxxiii. 16. (g) xxiv. 8.

boasting and confidence ; for we cannot safely depend upon the probability of second Causes, any otherwise than in a due subordination and deference to the First. Nor ought we to consider them in any other light, than as encouraging Pledges of that divine Providence, under favour of which these promising Preparations have been so happily conducted. Another circumstance, in which it is very desirable to have the Lord favourably with us, is,

(3.) That of the Distemper which still rages amongst our Cattle in several Parts of this Kingdom, and in the next adjoining County, at this Day. And surely if agreeable to the Character of the *righteous Man*, we regard the *Life of our Beasts* (a), it will draw forth our Compassions to behold, or to reflect upon, the Miseries of our distempered Herds. It would be cruel and barbarous, even abstracted from Views of Interest, to feel no Regret at finding the Contagion still propagated from Herd to Herd, after such Numbers of them have been so miserably broken. But it will greatly increase our Sensibility and Concern, if we reflect upon the Value and Usefulness of these Creatures, which by the wise Ordination of a benevolent Providence, were placed among us, to increase our Riches

(b) Prov. xii. 10.

Riches, and contribute to our Comfort and Happiness. They furnish us with many Conveniencies of Life. While we permit them to live, they range in our Fields, where they are supported by such Herbs, as we can most conveniently spare for their Sustenance; and some of them, Morning and Evening repay the obligation, with a liberal Flow of that which ministers to our own. So that while they live, they supply us with that, which is next to Bread; and their Flesh when they are slaughtered for our Use, affords us so nourishing a Food, that we are content to leave the most exquisite delicacies to return to it. They supply us with materials for lengthening out our Days, and alleviating the darkness of our Nights. And various other Conveniencies are derived to us by their means; which though they are apt to be depreciated by the easiness, with which they are obtained, we nevertheless, should be but too sensibly instructed how to value, by being totally deprived of them.

If to the Consideration of their general Usefulness, we add that of the private Interest of great numbers amongst us, whose Property they are, this is a reflection which opens to us the sad prospect of the ruin or distress of their Families; and this not only involves in it that of
their

their dependants, but most apparently strikes also at the Lords and Proprietors of the Manors and the Farms. And considering the mutual dependance that there is between the different ranks of Men, we cannot but admit it to be a matter of common concern, with which, if it should continue to prevail, we should universally be affected, either immediately, or in its remoter consequences.

Now as *there is no evil which the Lord hath not done* in reference to *the City (i)* and the *State*, so neither can we exclude his Providence from the *Country* and the *Field*. He is the Author of their Life, which he maintains by the air in which they breathe, and the *food for which they all wait upon him (k)*, and which he causes to pass to them under our Care and through our Hands. But alas! we have been setting up ourselves as Lords of his Creation, and have forgotten God, to whom we are indebted for such useful Creatures, and for all the comforts and conveniences we have enjoyed by their means. And therefore, for many years past, he has been calling upon us by his *justice*, to reflect upon his *bounty*, and the constant dependance which we have upon him. And can we receive these awful admonitions without reflecting on our

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(i) Amos iii. 6.

(k) Psal. civ. 27.

luxury and abuse of these, and other creatures of God, by which we have forfeited their use and benefit? What but the sins of men, is the heavy burthen under which so valuable a part of the *Creation*, has been so long *groaning* (k) and perishing? *Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee* (l), that it is the Lord's controversy; and declare by their convulsions and dying groans, *that the land is defiled; and the Lord is visiting the iniquity thereof upon it* (m). And this affords a reflection sufficient to melt a heart of very little tenderness, to think how the inferior Creatures suffer for our transgressions, and are groaning under the double burthen, of being made subservient to the lusts of Men, and subject to the curse of God on account of them. And now let me ask, which of us who has ever considered this national Visitation in these affecting views, will refuse to confess, that the presence of God in a way of favourable Dispensation, is of vast importance to our relief? This Pestilence has hitherto defy'd all human methods of Cure. And while the great Author of life and health to the whole animal Creation, has been hiding his face from us, vain have been all the Experiments which have been tried to stop its progress. And if any future Attempts shall
suc_

(k) Rom. viii. 22. (l) Job xii. 7. (m) Lev. xviii. 25.

succeed better for this sanatory purpose, our God must give them their success. We ourselves, as well as the inferior Creatures, depend upon his sustaining Presence and Operation for our well-being, and are as liable to Miseries, and to the inroad of mortal and pestilential Diseases, as any of those Beasts, which we may have seen perishing in their stalls or pastures. And unless we comply with the established Terms of obtaining his favourable Presence and Regards, he may so far forsake us, as to leave an open door for such Calamities to enter in, whereby we shou'd be more sensibly, because more immediately affected. I now proceed to declare,

III. The Terms upon which the favourable Presence of God with us, which you have seen, is of the greatest Importance to our national Happiness, may be expected, or it's contrary apprehended. *The Lord is with you, while you be with him ; if ye seek him he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.*

There have been, it must be confess'd, in all Ages, many mysterious Acts of Providence, in it's dispensations of Judgment and Mercy towards the Nations of the Earth ; upon some of which the supreme Potentate has look'd down

with a benigner aspect, and waited longer that he might be gracious (*n*), than he has on others in like guilty Circumstances. Nevertheless by these Terms, our ordinary Expectations ought to be determined. And if we recollect what his Dealings with us, and other Countries, have been, and especially if we consult the Scriptures, (which contain the most authentick history of Divine Providence,) we shall evidently perceive, that it's Aspects have generally been according to the religious Character and Conduct of any People; and Salvation or Ruin has not merely attended them, as the natural consequences of their prevailing Virtues or Vices; (*Righteousness* in it's own Nature, tending to exalt a Nation (*o*), and Sin to bring it into *Reproach* and Destruction;) but God has frequently interpos'd in a way of signal *Mercy*, to enrich a People who have fear'd him, with far greater publick Prosperity, than the Virtues they have exercis'd, cou'd otherwise have produc'd; and in a way of signal *Judgment* to chastise or to destroy a guilty People, without leaving them to die of those Wounds, which they had given themselves. The whole story of the *Jews* and their Affairs, with other Nations around them, is an illustration of this remark. When they kept with him, the Lord prospered them

(*n*) *Isai.* xxx. 18.

(*o*) *Prov.* xiv. 34.

them in their way. And when they fell from him, they fell under his rebukes. And herein they are a standing Example to all other publick Communities; especially to such, as are distinguish'd by the profession of his Name. But you will not take it into your thoughts, that any people, however obedient they may be, can merit the divine Presence and Favour, as properly, as by prevailing impiety and wickedness they might deserve, and justly incur the tokens of his Displeasure. Nevertheless, there are certain Qualifications which dispose for mercy, and certain Exercises which God enjoins in order to it. And if this Nation shou'd be so far abandon'd, as generally to neglect these, vain wou'd it be for us to hope for prosperity. We might justly forebode a departing God, who *if we forsake him, will forsake us*, and our hearts wou'd find reason to meditate Terror, if that Presence which has been the foundation and security of all the national Happiness we have enjoy'd, should be withdrawn from us (*p*).

Having premis'd this, give me leave, in stating the Terms of National Happiness, to lay them briefly before you in the following Particulars.

And if we can warrantably hope that the
Lord

Lord will be with us, no farther than while we are with him, this evidently implies

(1.) That we should humble ourselves deeply in his sight for those National Sins, by which we have departed from him. This is one of the great and indispensable Duties for which we have *this Day*, been summon'd into his Courts; and which we are to charge our Consciences to attend and prosecute in our respective Families, as well as Retirements, when we leave this House of Prayer; not thinking it sufficient to afflict our *Bodies* with a short abstinence from their accustomed supply of Food; or the humiliation of the few solemn hours, we shall have spent together, to answer the great occasions which we have to afflict our *Souls*, and to lie prostrate before God. How shou'd it humble us! what shame shou'd we take to ourselves! and what painful reflections shou'd we feel, when we recollect, how we have sinned and done wickedly! How much Deism and Infidelity is visible, amidst the blaze of the Gospel of Christ? With what fluency is the language of Hell spoke among us? And how are our ears grated with horrid Oaths, Curses, and Imprecations, which we are compell'd to hear, while we sit in our houses, as well as when we walk the streets? How many practise, without wearing upon their faces so much

much as the colour of Virtue, such things *as are not to be named among Christians* (q). While Drunkenness, Debaucheries, and Excess are so common, as to be able to consist with Reputation. How many Families have no Altar erected for God, and prophanely neglect to call upon his Name, in defiance of that Fury which threatens the desolation of such ungodly Houses (r)? How notorious is the profanation the *Sabbath*, the neglect of the Ordinances of Christ, and even the contempt of many of the Means of Grace and Salvation? And where the form of Religion is left, ah! how little of the power of it appears (s)? How few comparatively maintain the excellent Character of *Followers of Christ*, and appear to *be fully persuaded to be Christians* (t)? How few understand much more of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, than as they received it by tradition from their fathers, who perhaps profess'd it for no other reason, than because it was the religion of their Country? What a reproach are the Lives of many among us to this our holy Profession? And what gross ignorance, what inveterate prejudices, what incorrigible bigotry, and rigid uncharitableness, is there found in others; instead
of

(q) Eph. v. 3.

(r) Jer. x. 25.

(s) 2 Tim. iii. 5.

(t) Acts xxvi. 28.

of that excellent love which our gracious Master has recommended by precept and example, and so expressly made the distinguishing badge of his Followers (u)? How low is the stature to which Men of the greatest eminence in this our day, appear to rise? How do we loiter in the Christian race, *instead of pressing forwards towards the mark* (x)? And how hard a matter does it prove, under our differing apprehensions, *whereunto we have attained, to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing* (y)? What weakness of Faith? And what a general want of it's genuine and proper Fruits? What lukewarmness and indifference, as to Things of everlasting moment? And speak we of Zeal; how does the zeal of many flame out for trifles, or manifest itself to be set on fire of Hell? And how little is there to be seen of the true fervour of a Christian, which, animated by the good Spirit of God, and temper'd with the meekness of Wisdom, burns with love to God, and refreshes with it's lambent flame, as many as come within the reach of it's Influence. In these Things, and in many others, we have offended and come short. And lest he forsake us, and visit us for these Things, we should *sigh and cry*
for

(u) John xiii. 35.

(x) Phil. iii. 14.

(y) Ib. ver. 16.

for our abominations (z). And if we were affected and impressed, as this great occasion requires, we should wish *that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears; that we might weep day and night, in the first place, for our own, and then for the sins of our people* (a).

(2.) In order to our being with the Lord, it is requisite that our humiliations for those sins, by which we have forsaken him, should issue in our effectual return to him by unfeigned repentance. Otherwise, not all the external signs of the severest humiliation will have any signification or effect. Let us all therefore, seriously reflecting on the sins and desolations of other countries, and remembering (what we are not able to contest) that *except we repent, we shall all likewise perish* (b); look up to Jesus, *who is exalted at the right hand of God, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin* (c); and encouraging ourselves in him, who is *the Lord our righteousness and strength* (d), charge our consciences with the performance of this necessary duty. Let us address ourselves to it, as in the sight of him, *who trieth the hearts and the reins of men* (e), as

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well

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| (z) Ezek. ix. 4. | (a) Jer. ix. 1. | (b) Luke |
| xiii. 1—5, inclusive. | (c) Acts v. 31. | (d) Jer. |
| xxiii. 6, xxxiii. 16. | Isai. xlv. 24. | (e) Psal. vii. 9. |
| Jer. xi. 20. xvii. 10. xx. 12. | Rev. ii. 23. | Prov. xxi. 2. |

well as *pondereth their paths*, with a fixed purpose (by his assistance, and according to his word) to accomplish a diligent search, *that we may know, every man, the plague of his own heart*. And resolving to forsake every sinful way, and even every culpable neglect, (instead of censuring the vices of others, as the causes upon which our calamities or dangers are to be charged,) every one should scrutinize himself, and say, *What have I done?* and *what must I do?* What irregularity have I acted? What iniquity have I omitted to restrain? And what duty belonging to my station and character have I neglected? In what vain communication have I mingled? What appetite or passion has exceeded it's just bounds? and what vain or sensual, what covetous or aspiring, what distrustful and unbelieving thoughts, have I suffered *to lodge within me*, and am now under a particular call to discard? This, Sirs, is what God and Man expect from you and me. Nor can we hope that the Lord will subdue *our* enemies while we harbour *his*; or preserve us from calamity, if we provoke his vengeance by persisting in our sins. Were we, each of us, persuaded by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the mercies of God, and awakened by these terrors of
the

(f) Prov. v. 21.

(g) 1 Kings viii. 38.

the Lord, to the necessary care of amending *one*, we might then rejoice in the hope of seeing good days. But it will be but a vain hope, which any man can have for himself, who *shall go on in his trespasses*, and continue unreformed; even though he should mourn over the dangers of his Country, and water the Altar with his tears. Another means or term of obtaining the Presence of God with us, for National happiness, is

. (3.) Our being much with him in fervent effectual prayer, and supplication. Yes, my Friends, we must *cry unto the Lord*, who hearkens in Expectation of hearing from us *the voice of supplication*, as well as *weeping*. And this has been the constant practice of a penitent people. *So the people of Niniveh believed God, and proclaimed a Fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even unto the least of them; and they cried mightily unto God (b)*. And we have not only the experience of success which men of prayer, in all ages, have had, for the encouragement of our own hopes of audience and acceptance; but we have immediately in our view this most blessed promise; (and it is often repeated in our Bibles with a little variation of language;) *If we seek him, he will be found of*

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us,

(b) Jonah iii. 5, 8.

us. Whereas if a Land neglect the Lord, or the inhabitants of it should generally live *as without God in the world* (i); Woe be to such a Land, for it's defence and it's glory is near departing! Once more,

(4.) Our being with the Lord, in order to our obtaining his favorable Presence, implies our abiding with him as *our Refuge*, and surest protection and defence. We must put our trust and confidence in him, and cast ourselves upon his care. And at the same time that we make him this acknowledgment of our dependence, we must be careful to conduct ourselves in such a manner, as consistently to *hope in his mercy*. I mention this, because it is one of those things which *ought to be constantly affirmed* (n), that trust without allegiance is presumption; and to hope for God's presence, while we forsake him, is incongruous in the nature of things, as well as expressly precluded in scripture; where you have likewise the sense of this part of our subject strongly inculcated; viz. *If ye forsake him, he will forsake you.*

Thus have I told you faithfully and plainly upon what terms a Nation may expect the continuance of the divine Presence, which is the only sure foundation of it's Safety and Peace.

And

(i) Eph. ii. 12

(k) Tit. iii. 8.

And I desire that it may be observed, that these terms must be nationally complied with, in order to found a chearful hope of it's Prosperity and Happiness. But by this, I do not mean that every individual in the Nation must go into these measures for obtaining this end. That indeed were greatly to be wished; but who that has seen any thing of the corruption of mankind, can hope for it? Nevertheless a considerable part of the Nation, or a number of such men, as more especially represent and influence the Body, must concur. A very small number of private Penitents may indeed *save themselves*, or deliver their own souls; but it is seldom the case, that a few save a Nation. Since therefore these are duties of common importance, they should be generally attended to; and yet it is to be feared they will be very little regarded. I am sure there is no licence for any of us to withdraw our shoulders from the work. And while such multitudes among us are, as it were, conspiring to banish the divine Presence from us, we should be without excuse, if we could see the dangers of our country, and refuse to unite our endeavours, and our prayers, to prevent it's departure.

From

From what hath been said we may infer,

(I.) What a threatening aspect abounding iniquity casts upon a Nation. This is the grand obstacle to the public Weal. This is that which separates between God and a People, and provokes him to forsake and abandon them. And from hence it will plainly appear, that this our native Land has more Enemies than has been generally apprehended. If we talk of Enemies to *Great Britain*, our thoughts presently fly into foreign Countries, and there they are apt to stay, without returning to search for those which lurk at home. The number of *Jacobites*, those wretched incendiaries, and traytors to our Religion and to their Country, it must be confessed, are become inconsiderable, since that memorable Blow was given them, which we ought to record with the greatest Thankfulness. Nor have we now such great and just Provocation in beholding many of those, who live in Safety under the justest and the gentlest of all Governments upon the face of the Earth, venting their treasons, and endeavouring to corrupt weak minds, and seduce them from that chearful and grateful loyalty, which they owe to the best of Princes. And it is high time for the whole Nation to be convinced, if it be not already, (as I hope in a great measure it is,) that

that we should make a wretched change, by passing from this under a popish Government, which is one of the greatest plagues, and a yoke which neither we, nor our fathers, were ever able to bear.

But blessed be God, though at this Day, we consider these principles and pretensions with detestation and contempt, rather than with that Panic, which, within most of our Memories, they were apter to excite, we have yet intestine Enemies more inveterate, even than these; I mean our *Corruptions* and our *Vices*. Every wicked Man, who forsakes his Duty and his God, is adding to the dead weight of Guilt, which lies on the Land. And though he may think it hard, that he should be refused the character of a *Patriot*, yet in Proportion to the degree of his impiety, he is an Enemy to himself and his Country; and to his Posterity also, as far as his Country may be involved in his Doom.

(2.) We may infer, that we have great Reason to be thankful for those Tokens of God's favourable Presence, which we still enjoy, notwithstanding the Iniquity of our Land. If our God had utterly forsaken us, we should have had neither Opportunity nor Hearts given us, as on this Day, to *seek his Face*. He has not forbid

us to look up to him, *as the God of our Salvation*, and has afforded us in these favoured Islands so secure an habitation, that those concussions by which so many thousands in other Places have perished, have only affected some parts of our Territories with a slight Tremor; “ such as might be imputed to a gust of Wind; or the motion of a Coach.” The *British Constitution and the Liberties of Englishmen* are preserved inviolate. An unusual Unanimity is observable in our Counsels at Home. And our Enemies abroad have plainly appeared to be embarrassed and desponding. We are still supplied with Plenty of Food, not only for our Bodies, but for our Souls. Our God has not taken away his *Corn*, or his *Wine*, his *Wool* or his *Flax* (1); nor removed his *Gospel* or his *Holy Spirit* from us. And though some of his Frowns are evidently upon us, we have still a space and warning given us; together with a fair Invitation to those Duties, in which we may deprecate, and seek to avert his Judgments. It is matter of great Satisfaction and Thankfulness that God is publickly acknowledged. And we want not encouragement to hope that the numbers of those, who seriously regard his Operations and earnestly

(1) Hof. ii. 8, 9.

ly implore his Blessing upon the Community, will be so happy as to prevail. To conclude,

Let you and I, besides the Consideration of our own Welfare, strive together with those, who according to the terms that have been stated, are striving to engage the divine Presence Favour and Blessing, to abide with us. Would to God that all would concur in their respective Stations, and contribute their several Proportions to the aid of this national Cause! Would to God, that all our *Magistrates*, by their authority and examples, would restrain Transgressors; and secure to Virtue its just commendation and encouragement! Would to God, that all *Ministers of Religion* would deal faithfully with their respective Flocks, and that the Lord would appear more visibly with them, for the revival of the Life of Religion in our Churches! Would to God, that *Parents* would be persuaded to be diligent, in instructing and forming the flexible minds of their young Offspring; that so their families may prove nurseries for the Churches;—flourishing under the advantage and culture of a religious Education and the Dews of Heaven;—and affording us, under our present decays, some encouragement to hope that the next Generation will be better than this!

F

I beseech

I beseech you, Brethren, let us join hand and heart in this Confederacy. Then, if we shou'd not be so happy as to prevail for the Safety of the Nation, yet we shall deliver ourselves; and the conscioufness of our Fidelity, as to that which was incumbent upon us, will yield us a mighty Consolation in the view of any Calamity, which the Sins or the Negligence of others may bring upon it.

Hoping the best, if it shall please God to favour our dear Country with fresh tokens of his Protection and Presence, we shall then with a peculiar Joy receive the approaches of his Mercy; and be able to say, with a grateful glow in our Bosoms, *Lo! this is our God; and we have waited for him (m);* these are the engaging Ways in which he answers our Prayers; and (perhaps we may see reason to add) exceeds our Expectations.

But supposing the worst, of all that we have any reason to apprehend shou'd come, we shall be safe from the danger of Destruction; and if we understand our true Privilege, *quiet* likewise *from the fear of Evil*. What? *Tho' the Flocks shou'd be cut off from the folds*. What? *Tho' the Pestilence should leave no Herd in the stalls, or our Fields shou'd yield no meat*, we might nevertheless

vertheless rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our Salvation (n).

What? If days of Darknefs and Distraction shou'd come; if this peaceful Land shou'd be over-run with armed Legions of our Enemies; and amidst the wild uproar and tumult of War, Property shou'd be brought into dreadful hazard, and our very Lives shou'd hang in a perpetual suspense, infomuch as that tremblings of Heart, and failing of Eyes, and sorrow of Mind, shou'd become the dismal Distinctions of our Times? We have a glorious Reversion laid up for us out of the reach of rapine; we have a deathless *Life which is hid with Christ in God*; with whom we likewise have a most blessed *Peace through Jesus Christ our Lord*. The Gospel brings the Olive-branch from Heaven; and tho' Wasting and Destruction shou'd be seen triumphant within our Borders, yet *the Covenant of Peace shall never be removed*.

Finally, *Should the Earth be moved, and the Mountains cast into the midst of the Sea*; shou'd these perishable Bodies be transmitted down to the Center, and be involv'd in no less a Wreck of Nature, than that which the last general Conflagration will occasion; yet our Souls shall find a Refuge in God; his Angels will be com-

F 2

mission'd

mission'd to convey them into the Presence of our Lord, and the Society of the Blessed in Heaven. And *knowing that our Redeemer liveth, we shall yet in our flesh see God.* For after all that the *Worms* or the *Flames* shall have done towards the destruction of this Body, Jesus in whom we trust, and in whom we believe as the *Resurrection and the Life*; (by that Power by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself,) will assuredly accomplish all his gracious Designs towards his own Servants; and will crown the utmost Endeavour, and earnest Expectation and Hope of his believing People, who are willing to *suffer the loss of all Things*, if by any means *they may win Christ, and attain to the Resurrection of the Dead.* Amen.

The END of the S E R M O N.



A H Y M N.

I.

LORD, where should I my Refuge make,
If thee, my Fortress, I forsake?
Dear Lord, I no where else can be
So safe, so happy, as with thee.

II.

To hide beneath thy Wings I haste,
Till these Calamities are past;
And, if my Voice cou'd make them hear,
I'd call all Nations to me there.

III.

But tho' my Voice is found too weak,
Yet, hark! the Lord from Heaven will speak,
By Herds, whose dying Groans afar,
Eccho to sad Alarms of War.

IV.

IV.

Majestick Terror is his Robe.
He looks — and shakes near half the Globe.
And, had it rock'd from Pole to Pole,
What wonder ? When he made the Whole.

V.

See ! *Britons*, where late *Lisbon* stood,
And mark the Grandeurs of your God !
Who in rude Heaps her Piles has laid,
And there entomb'd her Thousands dead.

VI.

The frighted Waters swell and pour
Their troubled Streams upon the Shore,
And these his Frowns shou'd work in me
Effects, like those on Earth and Sea.

VII.

Lord, make my Flesh to tremble too ;
Melt me to an unusual Flow ;
And sink my tow'ring Thoughts, that I
At thy Rebukes may prostrate lie !

VIII.

See, Lord, my inward Bowels move,
To think how I've abus'd thy Love,

Help

(47)

Help me to mourn, repent and pray,
And ne'er forget my Vows to Day!

IX.

Let me be one of those that stand
Full in the Breach, to save the Land.
Then, if for this, we can't prevail,
We shall be safe, tho' Nature fail.

X.

Then let the last great Flames arise
And mingle Lands, and Seas, and Skies ;
They'll send us where our Saviour is,
And leave us happy in his Peace.

The E N D.



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